Findings Report for a Statistically Valid Community Interest and Opinion Survey



Submitted to The Fairfax County Park Authority By

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Community Interest and Opinion Survey Executive Summary Report

Overview and Methodology

ETC Institute conducted a Community Interest and Opinion Survey for the Fairfax County Park Authority during the months of March through June of 2015 to help determine parks and recreation priorities for the community. The survey was developed in unison with the park district to understand issues of importance to Fairfax County and the providence of parks and recreation services to the citizens of Fairfax County. Leisure Vision worked directly with representatives of the Fairfax County Park Authority to develop survey questions regarding important issues to the community. Questions on the survey included a full range of current usage and travel questions, the need and un-met needs for a wide range of passive and active parks and facilities, individual participation in a comprehensive range of recreation, cultural, and sports activities, the priority importance of programs and facilities, support for funding improvements to the system etc. The final survey was 7 pages in length.

The goal was to complete a total of 4,000 surveys within the Park Authority's fourteen (14) Planning Districts. The survey was mailed to a random sample of 35,000 households in Fairfax County. An option to complete the survey online and in Spanish was also available to residents who had that preference. A total of 4,665 households completed the survey, including 435 by online and 4225 by mail which far exceeded the goal of 4,000. The results for the sample of 4,665 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision rate of at least +/- 1.4%. Surveys completed from each Planning District are shown below.

lanning District	Completed Surveys
Baileys	136
Mclean	407
Annandale	388
Mt. Vernon	385
Fairfax	284
Bull Run	451
Springfield	224
Jefferson	205
Lincolnia	67
Rose Hill	239
Pohick	802
Lower Potomac	144
Upper Potomac	540
Vienna	374
Other	14
Total	4665



Weighting: Weighting is frequently used technique in order to ensure the profile data collected through the survey is representative of the population. When looking at the age distribution in Fairfax County, results looked to be skewed slightly toward older adults creating an over representation of the 55 and older segment of the population. Leisure Vision/ETC Institute applied weighting techniques in order to create a more evenly distributed data set. By comparing ages of survey respondents to the target population, Leisure Vision/ETC Institute was able to balance out the data and achieved results that are aligned with population characteristics.

Major Findings

VISITATION OF PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

- <u>Park Usage</u>: Based on the percentage of respondents, 87% indicated they had visited a park operated by the Fairfax County Park Authority over the past 12 months and 13% indicated they had not.
- Quality of Parks and Recreation Facilities: Based on the percentage of respondents who have visited parks operated by the Fairfax County Park Authority, 62% rated the physical condition of all parks, trails and recreation facilities as "good". Other ratings of the parks, trails and recreation facilities are: excellent (29%), fair (9%) and less than 1% indicated poor.

PARK AUTHORITY IMPROVEMENTS

- Agreement with Suggested Improvements: Based on the respondent households' level of agreement, ninety-four percent (94%) indicated they either "strongly agree" or "agree" it is important to preserve open space and environment. Other statements with similar levels of agreement are: provide opportunities to improve physical health and fitness (91%), make Fairfax County a more desirable place to live (90%), and provide recreational facilities/programs for children and teens (90%).
- Most Important for Fairfax County to do for Households: Based on the percentage of respondents' top three most important statements, 57% indicated that *preserve open space* and environment is most important to their household. Other most important statements include: improve physical health and fitness (54%), provide recreational facilities/programs for children and teens (35%), and make Fairfax County a more desirable place to live (33%).
- Most Important to the Future of Fairfax County: Based on the percentage of respondents' top three most important statements, 60% indicated that *preserve open space* and environment is most important to the future of Fairfax County. Other most important statements include: make Fairfax County a more desirable place to live (48%), improve physical health and fitness (35%), and provide recreational facilities/programs for children and teens (27%).



PARKS AND FACILITIES

- Park and Facility Types Households Have a Need For: Based on the percentage of respondents, 84% or 329,750 households indicated that they have a need for paved walking and biking trails. Other parks and facilities respondents have a need for include: large regional parks (78% or 306,252 households), small community parks (65% or 292,545 households), unpaved walking and biking trails (65% or 253,383 households), and historic sites and museums (64% or 251,425 households).
- How Well Needs are Being Met by Parks and Facilities: Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents indicated *large regional parks* either "fully met" or "mostly met" their needs. Other parks and facilities with similar levels of needs met include: historic sites and museums (78%), and small community parks (77%).
- Most Important Parks and Facilities: Based on the percentage of respondents top four most important parks and facilities, 54% indicated that *paved walking and biking trails* is most important to their household. Other most important statements include: large regional parks (46%), small community parks (44%), and unpaved walking and biking trails (33%).

OUTDOOR AND INDOOR FACILITIES

- Outdoor and Indoor Facilities Households Have a Need For: Based on the percentage of respondents, 67% or 262,390 households indicated that they have a need for *swimming pools*. Other outdoor and indoor facilities respondents have a need for include: exercise and fitness facilities (63% or 248,292 households), gyms (50% or 193,855 households), water parks and spraygrounds (44% or 173,491 households), and tennis courts (38% or 146,860 households).
- How Well Needs are Being Met by Outdoor and Indoor Facilities: Seventy-seven percent (77%) of respondents indicated *baseball fields* (60ft bases) either "fully met" or "mostly met" their needs. Other outdoor and indoor facilities with similar levels of needs met include: baseball fields (90ft bases) (74%), and swimming pools (72%).
- Most Important Indoor and Outdoor Facilities: Based on the percentage of respondents' top four most important statements, 52% indicated that *swimming pools* are most important to their household. Other most important statements include: exercise and fitness facilities (45%), gyms (31%), water parks and spraygrounds (28%), and soccer/football/lacrosse/field hockey/rugby fields (28%).

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Programs and Activities Households Have a Need For: Based on the percentage of respondents, 77% or 301,553 households indicated that they have a need for *biking*, *hiking walking*. Other programs and activities respondents have a need for include: exercise/fitness (61% or 236,934 households), special events, concerts (58% or 225,969 households), boating, fishing, camping (42% or 162,917 households), and nature/environmental programs (39% or 151,560 households).



- How Well Needs are Being Met by Programs and Activities: Eighty-one percent (81%) of respondents indicated *biking*, *hiking*, *walking* either "fully met" or "mostly met" their needs. Other programs and activities with similar levels of needs met include: exercise/fitness (69%), birthday parties (64%), and learn to swim lessons (63%).
- <u>Usage of Programs and Activities</u>: Eighty-seven percent (87%) of respondents have indicated they have used *biking*, *hiking*, *walking* during the past 12 months. Other programs and activities that respondents used during the past 12 months: exercise/fitness (64%), and special events and concerts (59%).

BY AGE GROUP

- <u>Under age 18</u>: Based on the percentage of respondent households with children under age 18 top two choices, 26% indicated *learn to swim lessons* as the most important to their household. Other programs and activities with similar levels of importance to households include: summer day camps (17%), and biking, hiking, walking (14%).
- Ages 18 to 49: Based on the percentage of respondent households with members ages 18 to 49 top two choices, 38% indicated *biking*, *hiking*, *walking* as the most important to their household. Other programs and activities with similar levels of include: exercise/fitness (24%), special events, concerts (15%), boating, fishing, camping (13%), and programs for families (10%).
- Ages 50 and older: Based on the percentage of respondent households with members ages 50 and older top two choices, 34% indicated *biking*, *hiking*, *walking* as the two most important to their household. Other programs and activities with similar levels of importance include: exercise/fitness (22%), boating, fishing, and camping (9%), and special events, concerts (9%).

SUPPORT AND FUNDING FOR PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

- Based on the percentage of respondent households who indicated their level of support as either "very supportive" or "somewhat supportive," 87% indicated that they support the county to *expand/renovate walking biking trails and connect existing trails*. Other improvements with similar levels of support include: restore/maintain natural areas (86%), upgrade/renovate existing park buildings and facilities (86%), and purchase land for passive recreational uses (82%).
- Willingness to Fund with County Tax Dollars: Based on the sum of respondents top four most willing actions, 45% indicated they would be willing to *expand/renovate* walking/biking trails and connect existing trails with county tax dollars. Other actions households are most willing to fund with tax dollars include: purchase land to preserve open space and natural areas (40%), upgrade/renovate existing park buildings and facilities (31%), restore/maintain natural areas (31%), and purchase land for passive recreational uses (28%).



• Allocation of Funds: Residents were given the opportunity to allocate \$100 to various categories. Based on the overall percentage of respondents, households would spend the most money \$30 to repair/maintain existing parks and infrastructure. Other allocations of funds were: upgrade/expand existing park facilities (\$22), repair/maintain existing parks and infrastructure (\$18), conserve and maintain natural and historic resources (\$18), acquire new parkland and open space (\$17), and develop new recreation and parks facilities (\$12).

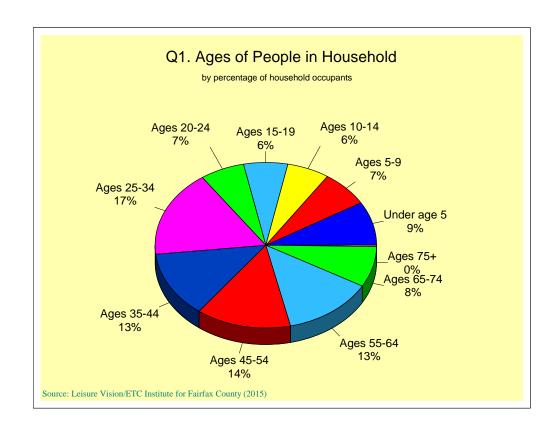
RATING AND IMPORTANCE OF PARK SYSTEM

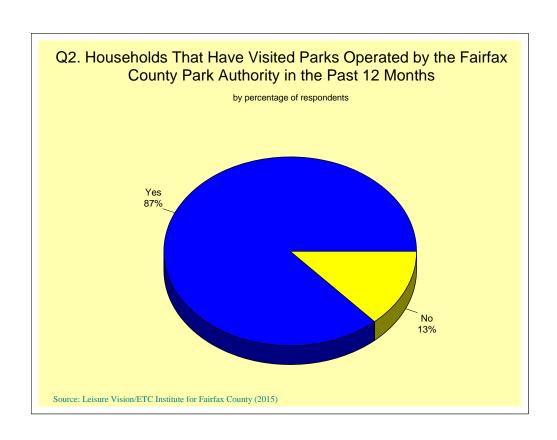
- <u>Satisfaction with Park System</u>: Based on the percentage of respondents, 57% rated their level of satisfaction with the park system as an 8 or higher on a 10 point scale. Other ratings include: 4-7 (34%), and 1-3 (9%).
- <u>Importance of High Quality Parks to Quality of Life</u>: Based on the percentage of respondents 62% indicated high quality parks, trails, recreation facilities and services are *extremely important* to the quality of life in Fairfax County. Other ratings of importance are: very important (31%), somewhat important (6%), and not at all important (1%).

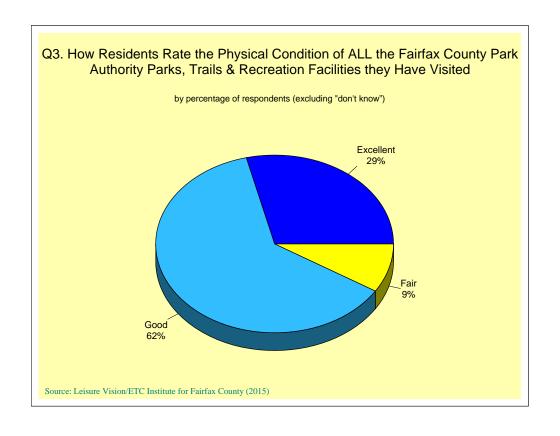
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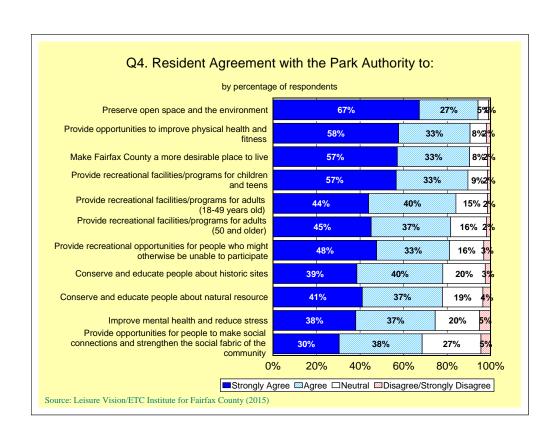
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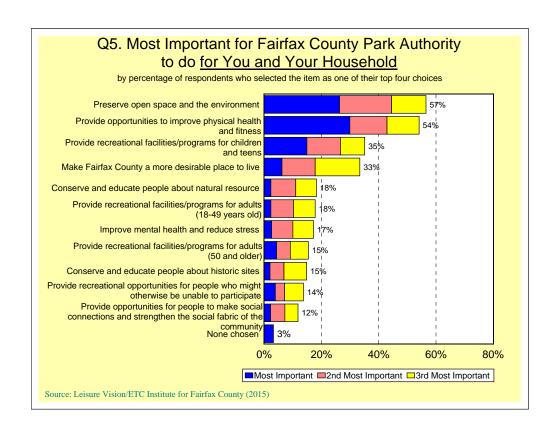
Fairfax County Community Needs Assessment Findings
Section 1
Charts and Graphs

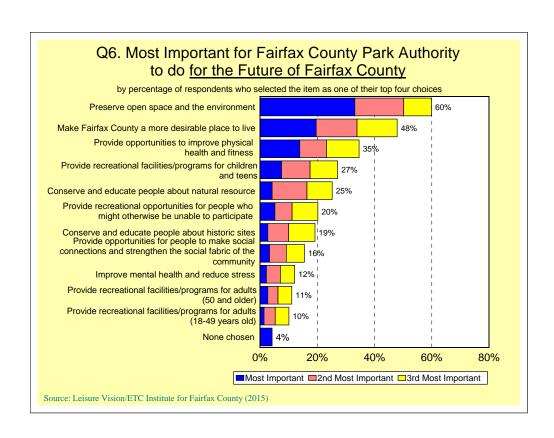


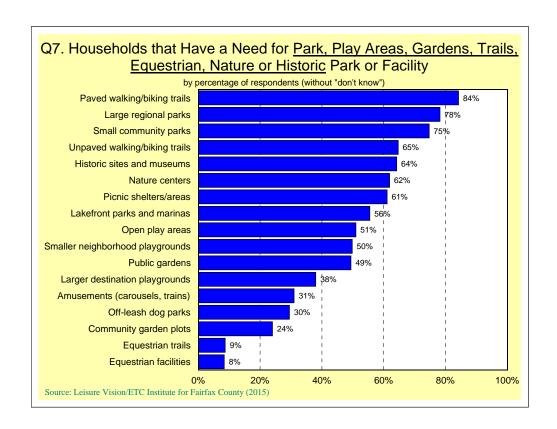


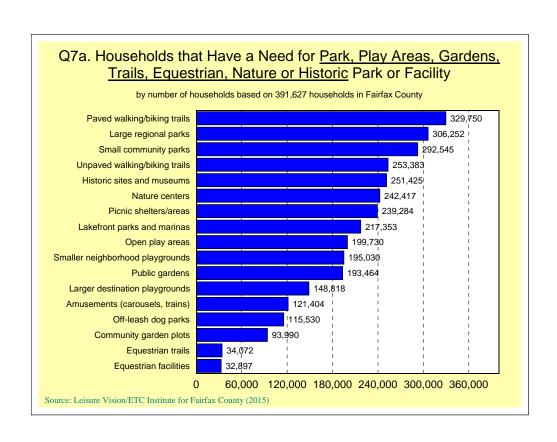


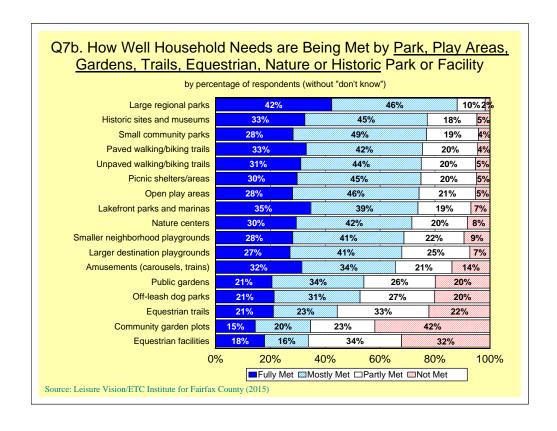


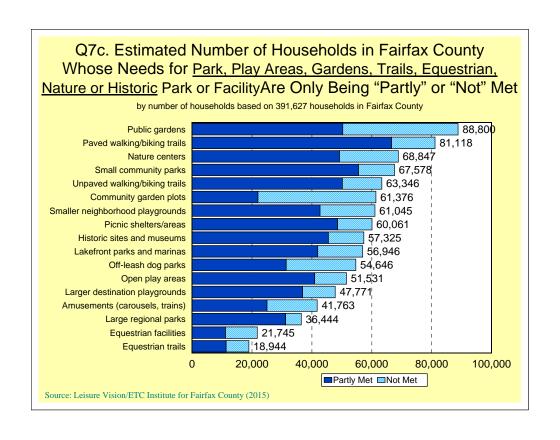


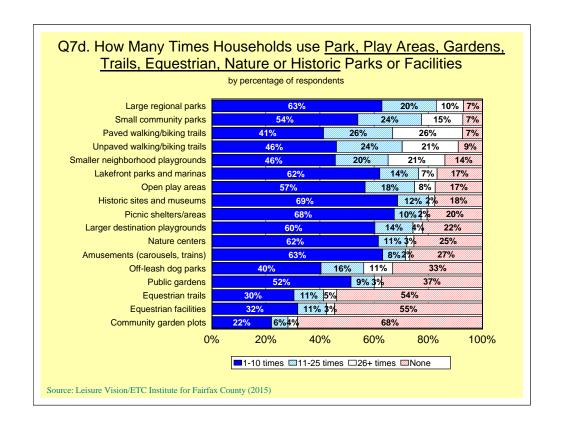


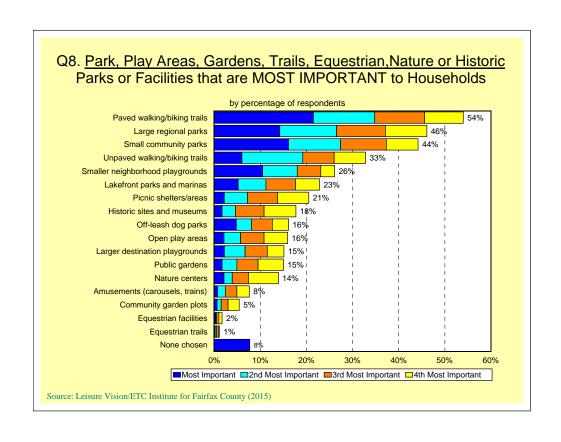


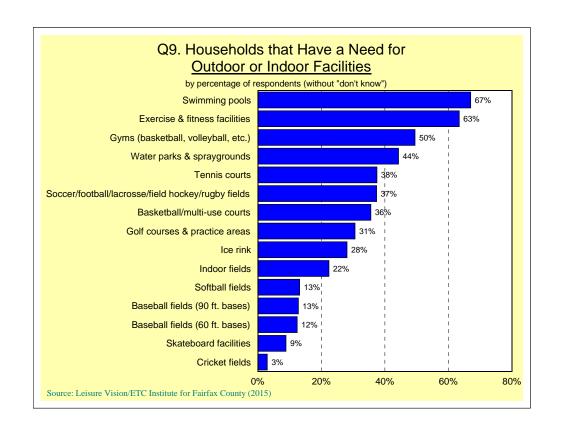


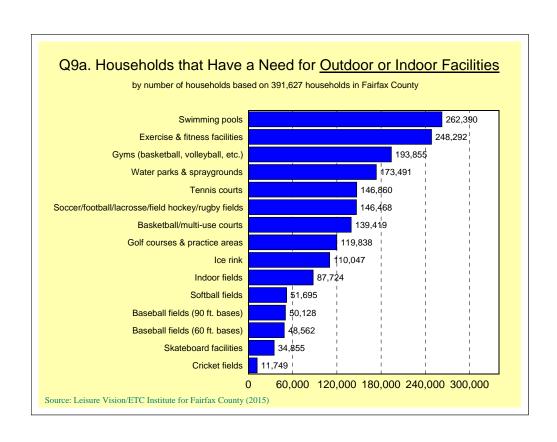


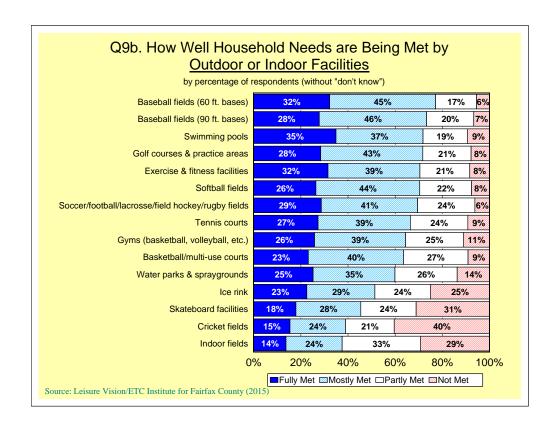


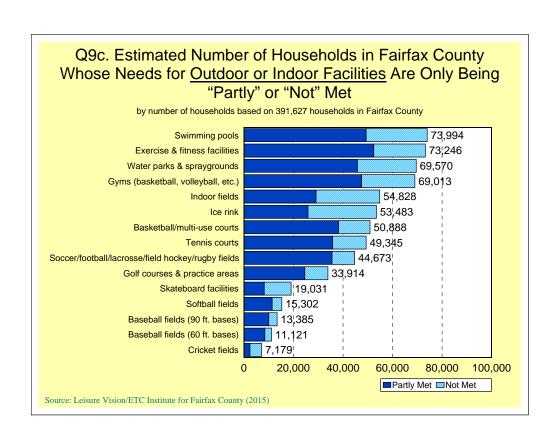


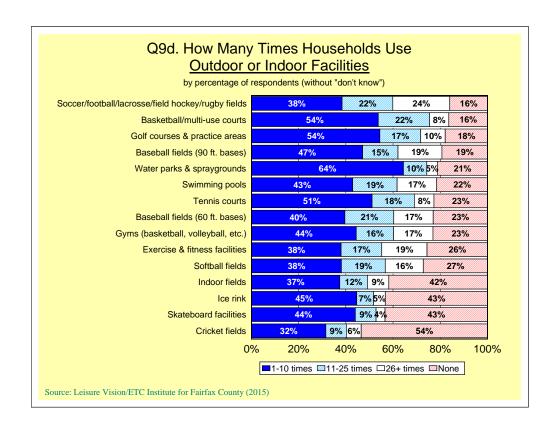


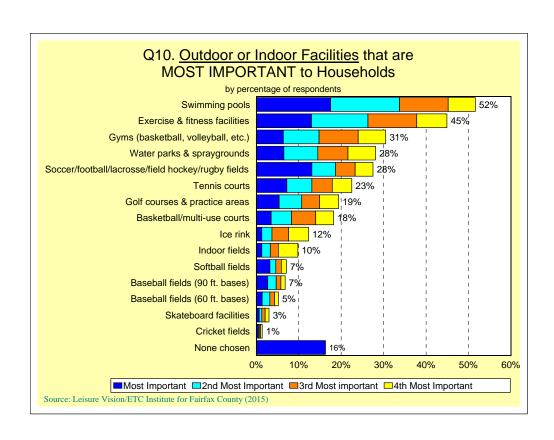


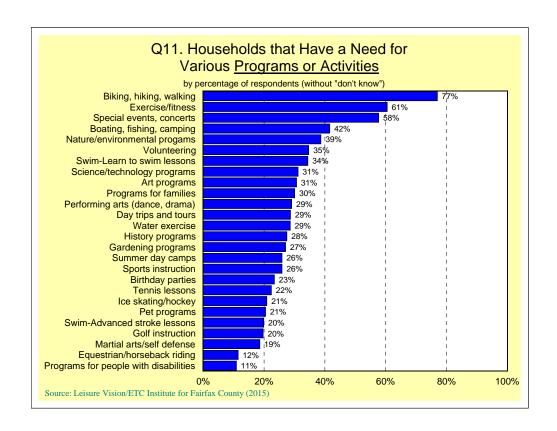


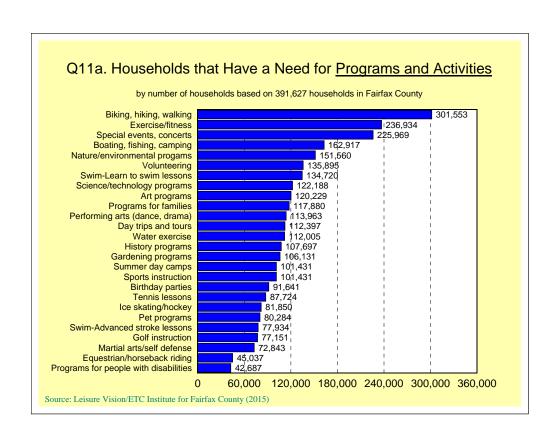


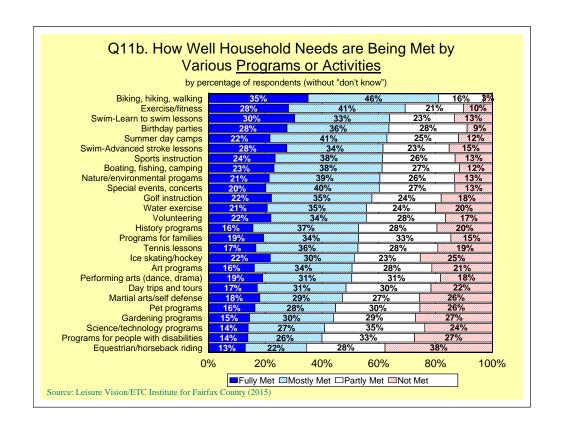


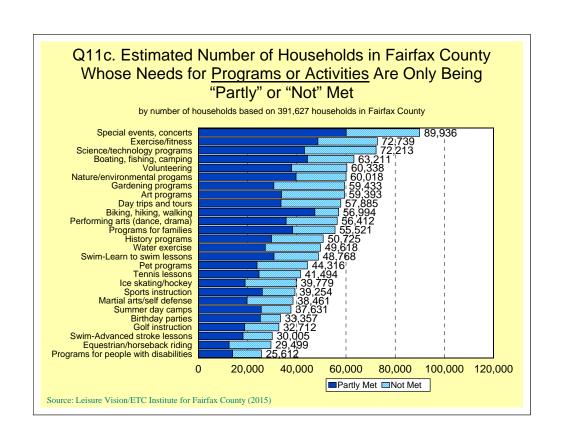


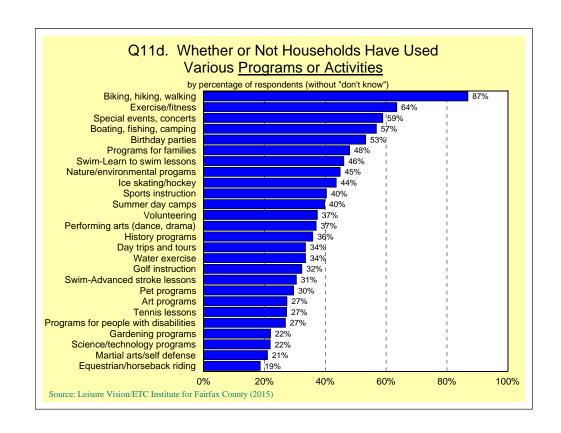


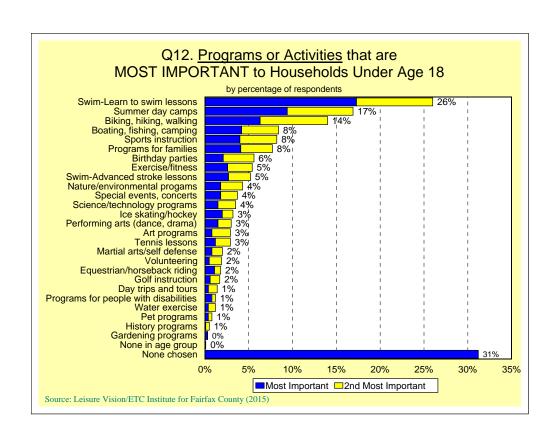


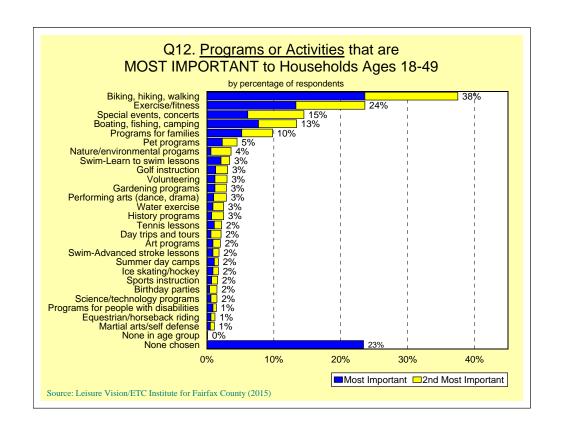


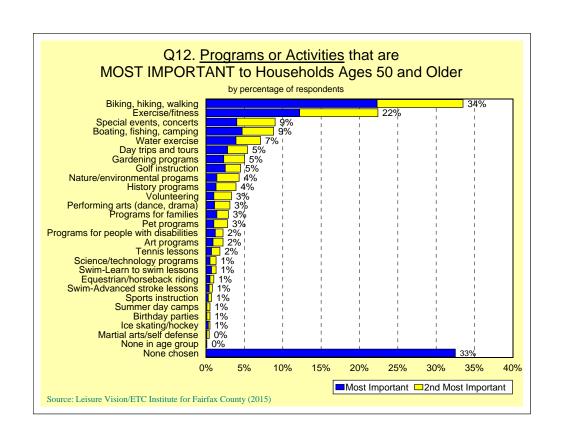


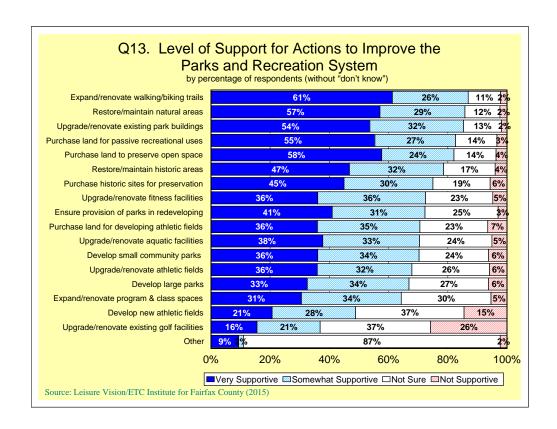


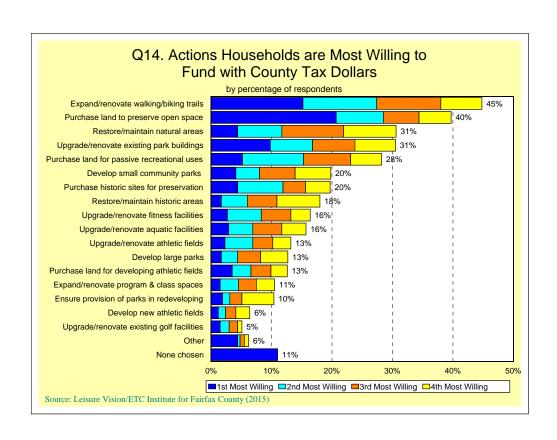


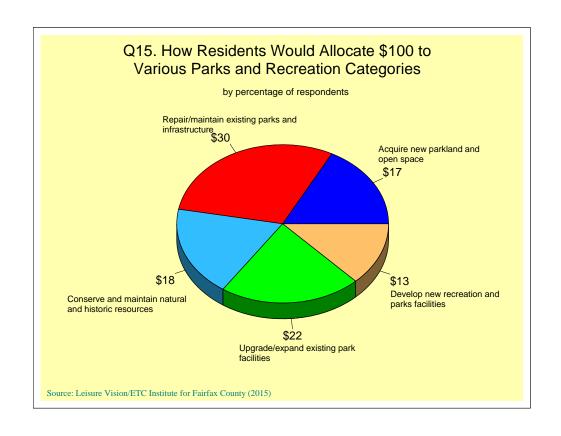


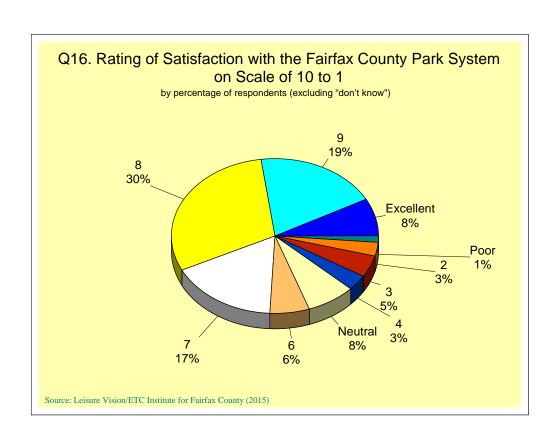


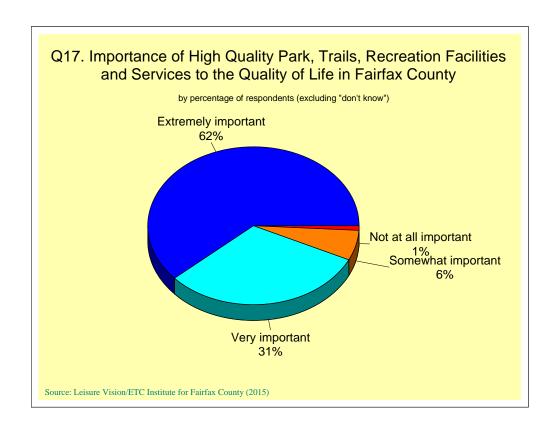


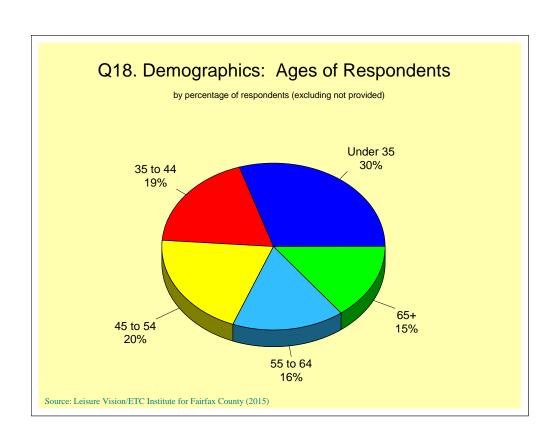


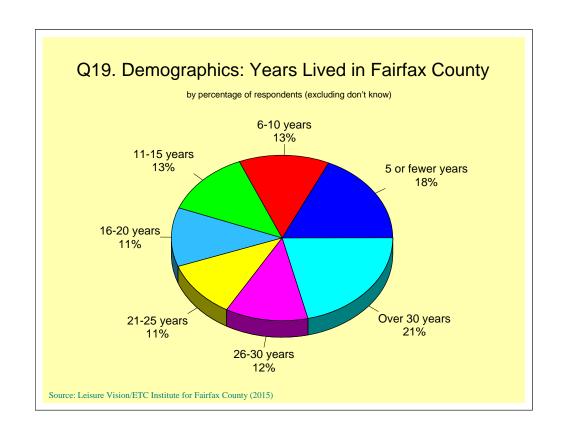


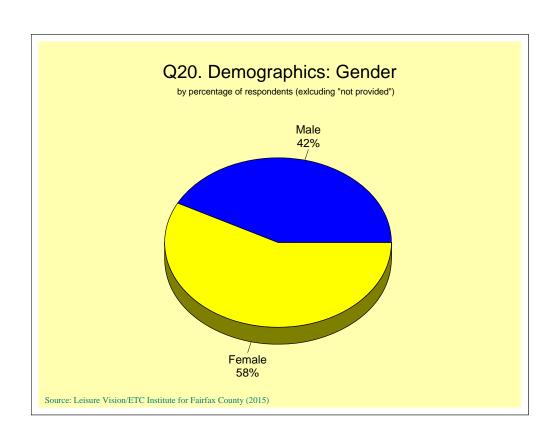


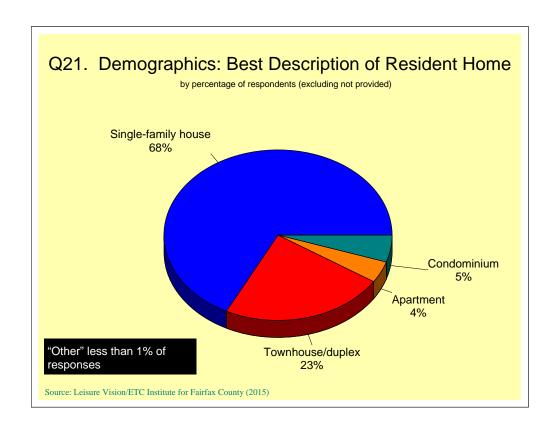


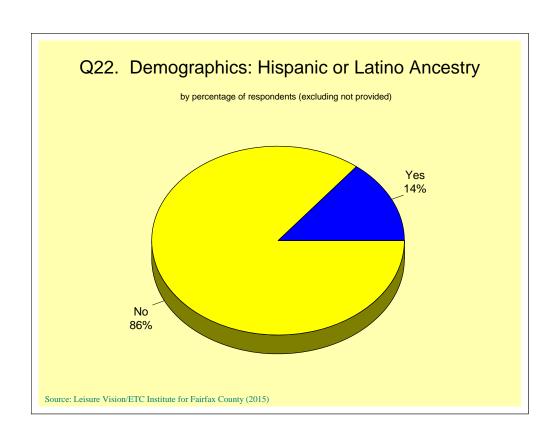


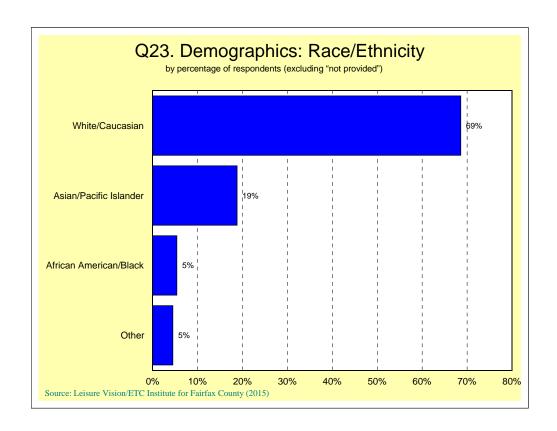


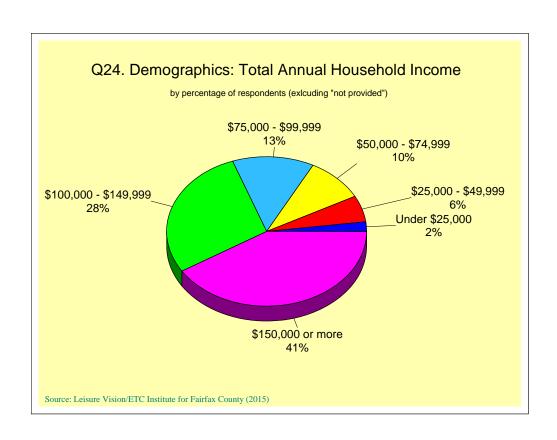












Failtax County Continuinty Needs Assessment Findings
Section 2 Benchmarks

National Benchmarking

Since 1998, Leisure Vision (a division of ETC Institute) has conducted household surveys for needs assessments, feasibility studies, customer satisfaction, fees and charges comparisons, and other parks and recreation issues in more than 700 communities in over 45 states across the country.

The results of these surveys has provided an unparalleled data base of information to compare responses from household residents in client communities to "National Averages" and therefore provide a unique tool to "assist organizations in better decision making."

Communities within the data base include a full-range of municipal and county governments from 20,000 in population through over 1 million in population. They include communities in warm weather climates and cold weather climates, mature communities and some of the fastest growing cities and counties in the country.

"National Averages" have been developed for numerous strategically important parks and recreation planning and management issues including: customer satisfaction and usage of parks and programs; methods for receiving marketing information; reasons that prevent members of households from using parks and recreation facilities more often; priority recreation programs, parks, facilities and trails to improve or develop; priority programming spaces to have in planned community centers and aquatic facilities; potential attendance for planned indoor community centers and outdoor aquatic centers; etc.

To keep the benchmarking data base current with changing trends, Leisure Vision's benchmarking data base is updated on an annual basis.

Results from household responses for Fairfax County were compared to National Benchmarks to gain further strategic information. A summary of all tabular comparisons are shown on the following page.

Note: The benchmarking data contained in this report is protected intellectual property. Any reproduction of the benchmarking information in this report by persons or organizations not directly affiliated with Fairfax County is not authorized without written consent from Leisure Vision/ETC Institute.

Benchmarking for Fairfax County Comm	nunity Interest and Opi	nion Surveys
	National Average	Fairfax County 2015
las your household visited any parks or facilities luring the past year?		
Yes	79%	87%
No	21%	13%
140	2170	1070
low would you rate the quality of all the larks/facilities you've visited?		
Excellent	31%	29%
Good	54%	62%
Fair	12%	9%
Poor	2%	0%
Recreation programs that respondent households have a need for		
Art programs (average of youth and adult)	21%	31%
Nature/environmental programs	32%	39%
Programs for people with disabilities	12%	11%
Special events	40%	58%
Tennis lessons and leagues	17%	22%
Water fitness programs	30%	29%
Exercise/Fitness programs(average of youth and adult)	19%	61%
Learn to Swim programs	25%	34%
Biking, hiking, walking	N/A	77%
Boating, Fishing, Camping	N/A	42%
Volunteering	N/A	35%
Science/technology programs	N/A	31%
Programs for families	N/A	30%
Performing arts	20% *combined adult/youth	29%
Day trips and tours	N/A	29%
History programs	N/A	28%
Gardening Programs	N/A	27%
Summer Day Camps	20%	26%
Sports instruction	27%	26%
Birthday parties	17%	23%
Ice skating/hockey	N/A	21%
Pet programs	N/A	21%
Swim-advanced stroke lessons	N/A	20%
Golf instruction	20%	20%
Martial arts/self defense	15%	19%

	National Average	Fairfax County 2015
rks and recreation <u>facilities</u> that respondent		
useholds have a need for		
Community Gardens	33%	24%
Equestrian Facility/Trails (average of Facilities/trails)	12%	8%
Historic Facilities	45%	64%
Large Regional Parks	55%	78%
Nature Center/Nature Trails	53%	62%
Off-leash dog parks	27%	30%
Picnic Shelters and areas	53%	61%
Playground Equipment for Children	43%	38%
Small community parks	60%	75%
Unpaved hiking/walking/mountain biking trails	50%	65%
Paved Walking & Biking Trails	69%	84%
Swimming pools	44%	67%
Exercise and fitness facilities	47%	63%
Gyms	27%	50%
Water parks&praygrounds	25%	44%
Tennis courts	26%	38%
Soccer/football/lacross/rugby	22%	37%
Multi-Use Courts (basketball)	27%	36%
Golf course and practice areas	30%	31%
Ice rink	26%	28%
Indoor fields	19%	22%
Skateboarding facilities	13%	9%
Lakefront parks and marinas	N/A	56%
Open play areas	N/A	51%
Smaller neighborhood playgrounds	N/A	50%
Public gardens	N/A	49%
Larger destination playgrounds	N/A	38%
Amusements	N/A	31%
Softball fields	16% *combined youth/adult	13%
Baseball fields (90ft bases)	N/A	13%
Baseball fields (60 ft bases)	23% *percentage of youth	12%

	National Average	Fairfax County 2015
ost Important Parks and Recreation Facilities to espondent Households	*Note: Items that did not have a national benchmark were left of the below analysis	
Community Gardens	8%	5%
Equestrian Facility/Trails (average of Facilities/trails)	3%	1%
Historic Facilities	10%	18%
Large Regional Parks	19%	46%
Nature Center	19%	14%
Off-Leash Dog Park	12%	16%
Picnic Shelters and Areas	17%	21%
Playground Equipment for Children	19%	15%
Small Community Parks	28%	44%
Unpaved hiking/walking/mountain bike trails	19%	33%
Paved Walking and Biking Trails	42%	54%
Swimming pools	18%	52%
Exercise and fitness facilities	20%	45%
Gyms	7%	31%
Water parks and spraygrounds	7%	28%
Soccer/football/lacrosse/field hockey/rugby fields	8%	28%
Tennis courts	7%	23%
Golf courses	12%	19%
Multi-use courts (basketball)	7%	18%
Ice rink	7%	12%
Indoor fields	4%	10%
Baseball Fields (60 ft bases)	9%	5%
Softball fields	7%	4%
Skateboard facilities	3%	3%

Fairfax County Community Needs Assessment Findings
Section 3 <i>Matrices</i>

Fairfax County, Virginia

Importance-Unmet Needs Matrix

The Importance-Unmet Needs Matrix is a tool for assessing the priority that should be placed on parks and recreation facilities and recreation programs in Fairfax County. Importance-Unmet Needs Assessments were completed for programs and facilities offered by Fairfax County. Each of the facilities and programs that were assessed on the survey were placed in one of the following four quadrants:

• **Top Priorities** (higher unmet need and higher importance). Items in this quadrant should be given the highest priority for improvement. Respondents placed a high level of importance on these items, and the unmet need rating is high. Improvements to items in this quadrant will have positive benefits for the highest number of Fairfax County residents.

<u>Fairfax County Parks, Play Areas, Gardens, Trails Equestrian, Nature or Historic Parks or Facilities:</u>

• None falling in this quadrant

Outdoor and Indoor Facilities:

Water parks and spray grounds

Programs and activities:

- -Under Age 18
 - Programs for families
- -Ages 18-49
 - Programs for families
- -Ages 50 and Older
 - Day trips and tours
 - Gardening programs
- Continued Emphasis (higher importance and low unmet need). Items in this quadrant should be
 given secondary priority for improvement. Respondents placed a high level of importance on
 these items, but the unmet need rating is relatively low.
- **Special Interest/Lower Priority** (lower importance and high unmet need). This quadrant shows where improvements may be needed to serve the needs of specialized populations. Respondents placed a lower level of importance on these items, but the unmet need rating is relatively high.

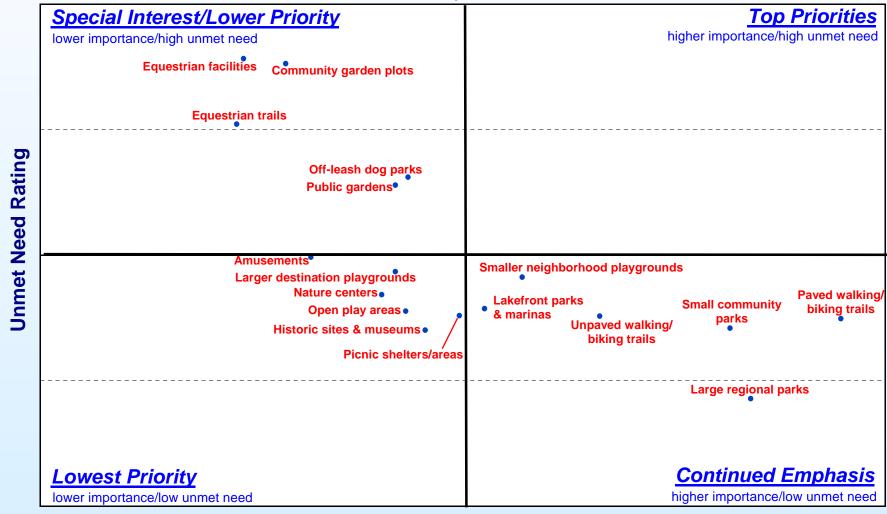
• Less Important (lower importance and low unmet need). Items in this quadrant should receive the lowest priority for improvement. Respondents placed a lower level of importance on these items, and the unmet need rating is relatively low.

The following pages contain the Importance-Unmet Needs Matrices for all parks and recreation facilities and recreation programs that were assessed on the survey.

mean unmet need

2015 Importance-Unmet Needs Assessment Matrix for Fairfax County Parks, Play Areas, Gardens, Trails, Equestrain, Nature or Historic Parks or Facilities

(points on the graph show deviations from the mean importance and unmet need ratings given by respondents to the survey) **mean importance**



Lower Importance

Importance Ratings

Higher Importance

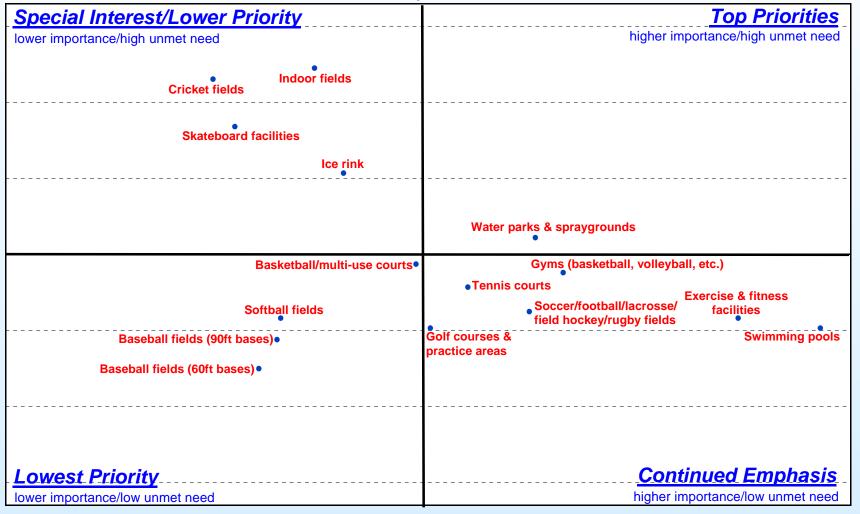
Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2015)

Unmet Need Rating

2015 Importance-Unmet Needs Assessment Matrix for Fairfax County Outdoor or Indoor Facilities

(points on the graph show deviations from the mean importance and unmet need ratings given by respondents to the survey)

mean importance



Lower Importance

Importance Ratings

Higher Importance

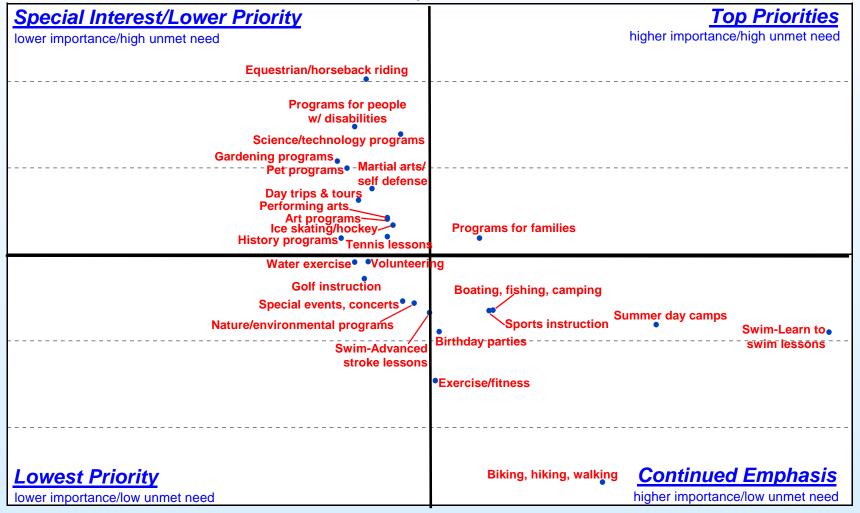
Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2015)

Unmet Need Rating

2015 Importance-Unmet Needs Assessment Matrix for Programs or Activities - Under Age 18

(points on the graph show deviations from the mean importance and unmet need ratings given by respondents to the survey)

mean importance



Lower Importance

Importance Ratings

Higher Importance

Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2015)

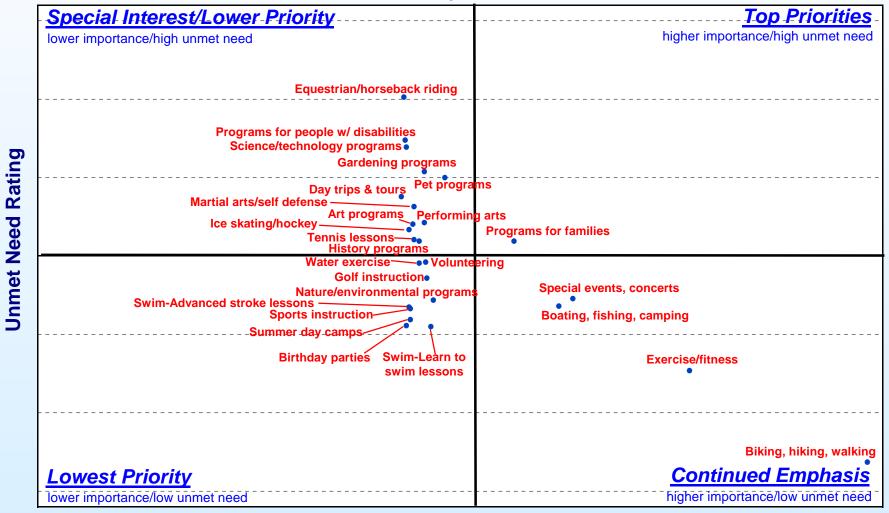
mean unmet need

mean unmet need

2015 Importance-Unmet Needs Assessment Matrix for <u>Programs or Activities</u> - *Ages 18-49*

(points on the graph show deviations from the mean importance and unmet need ratings given by respondents to the survey)

mean importance



Lower Importance

Importance Ratings

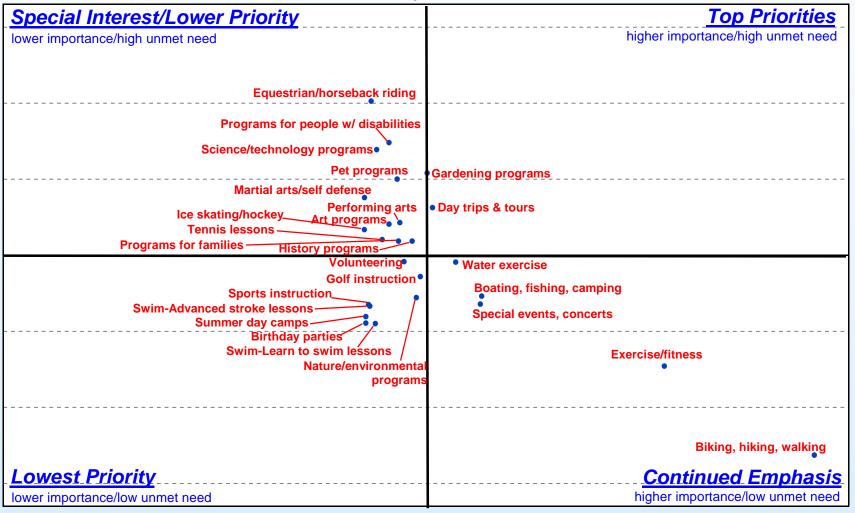
Higher Importance

Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2015)

Unmet Need Rating

(points on the graph show deviations from the mean importance and unmet need ratings given by respondents to the survey)

mean importance



Lower Importance

Importance Ratings

Higher Importance

Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2015)

mean unmet need